

Subject: English III Honors (50 Minutes)

Topic: *Julius Caesar*

Title of Lesson: Role of Women in *Julius Caesar*

Objectives:

1. Students will examine and interpret the role of women in *Julius Caesar* in relation to the theme of power in the play. ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2](#)) (E3-2.1)
2. Students will watch clips from an all-female production of *Julius Caesar* and define what makes the play different if all roles are played by women. ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.7](#)) (E3-2.2)
3. Students will collaborate to cast their own all-female production of *Julius Caesar* and give reasoning for their decisions. ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.2](#)) (E3-5.6)

Purpose:

The purpose of this lesson is to allow students to explore the idea that, in Shakespeare's time, gender did indeed mean power. Even by modern standards, men are often seen as more powerful. With all of the changes our society has made to change this system, it is important for the women of the class to feel empowered, too. This lesson serves to give the students a different point of view of *Julius Caesar* and when they are finished, students will be able to cast their own all female production using women that they believe would be characteristically fit to play the roles of men by today's standards.

Materials:

- NY Times Article "A Timeless Thirst for Power" (25)
- NY Times Article "Friends, Romans, Countrywomen" (25)
- Whiteboard (with articles pulled up) (1)
- Reader Response Journals (25)

-Pens, Pencils (25)

-Prezi Presentation- Will's Women

Procedures:

Procedures for *Introducing* the Lesson:

The students will come into class and take their seats with their reader response journals.

There will be a prompt written on the board with a few questions to answer with a partner.

1. What does it mean to be powerful in today's society?
2. Do you think that men are considered more powerful than women in today's society?
3. How do you define feminism?
4. How do you think Shakespeare deals with women? You can use *Julius Caesar* or any other play of Shakespeare's you have read.

After 5-7 minutes of discussion, we will come together as a class and share our responses. I will also share my responses in order to create a community within the classroom. We will discuss common issues that women face today, and what characters of the past do to shape these experiences.

Segue: In the Elizabethan era, women were not allowed to act on the stage, so they had young men play the female parts. I would like to hear some reaction to this, maybe start a small class discussion about why the playhouses would not allow women on stage and about some awesome women actors they know now. Jennifer Lawrence is a fan favorite, as well as Angelina Jolie or Shailene Woodley.

(10 minutes)

Procedures for *Developing* the Lesson:

At this point, we will read Act 2, Scene 1 aloud as a class. Students who wish to take on roles may do so, regardless of the gender of the part. This reading should take about (10 minutes.)

We will then split up into pairs and read the NY Times articles that I passed out to them while

they were working with partners on the prompts. I will have them read these articles silently, annotating them with things that they believe to be important. I will have them pay particular attention to the theme of power. I am purposefully leaving this question ambiguous because I am interested in seeing what they come up with.

Our first focus will be the piece “A Timeless Thirst for Power” because it draws many similarities between modern day politics and Julius Caesar as a Shakespeare play. Students will read this article first. After 5 minutes, I will have the students get into groups of 3 and discuss what stood out to them. One group member will write these answers on a sheet of paper. I will allow them to meet with one another for 5 minutes before I ask them to join in class discussion. We will discuss what we have found, any similarities or differences in what some students chose v. what others did. I will also take this time clear up any questions that any of the students may have about the governmental parties or policies mentioned in this article. I do not want to assume that they have all learned these phrases, but their U.S. History class will have covered many of them.

(10 minutes)

We will segue into my Prezi presentation by starting to discuss how this article deals with the idea that all of the characters in this production are women. This will move us into the Prezi presentation, which has embedded in it both information on Elizabethan and Roman women, but questions about the roles of Portia and Calpurnia in particular. We will answer this questions as a class. The next text that we are going to look at is another article from the NY Times. This article is entitled, “Friends, Romans, Countrywomen.” It begins with a short video of a Frances Barber performing a monologue as Julius Caesar. We will also read the article that it accompanies. Next, we will read the next article, “Friends, Romans, Countrywomen.” Students will read this article silently. This will lead us into a whole class discussion about the pros and cons of an all-female cast. (15 minutes)

Procedures for **Concluding** the Lesson: To conclude the lesson, I will ask student to write their own cast list for an all-female production of Julius Caesar using actors from Hollywood (past or present.) They may start their cast list before the bell rings and hand it in tomorrow as a homework assignment. It should be accompanied with reasons for the choice (this can be past characters they have played or personality traits they have shown previously) and a brief summary of what the actor playing Julius Caesar would have to do to prepare for her role as a man. This activity is adapted from *Bridging English's* Actor's Approach activity. (Milner, 258) When we come together tomorrow, students will meet up in groups and discuss their casting similarities, and similarities in their responses to what the actor would do to prepare. (Homework Assignment Attached)

Evaluating/Assessing the Learning:

During the lesson: I will walk around the room to check on progress as the class works both individually and in groups. Students are expected to participate in class, whether it is through writing or through speaking up during class discussion. Each student who works diligently and who is responsive to questions and to the things that their classmates are saying will receive 0.5 participation point.

After the lesson: Students who give in their reader response journals as exit slips will receive 1 participation point for their response. Groups that hand in their cast lists to me at the end of class will receive the other 0.5 participation point.

Accommodations for Diverse Learners:

Student Living in Poverty:

- Student will be given ample notice of deadlines
- Student will be offered extra help on assignments given
- Student will be offered use of school technology to type assignment. If student prefers to work from home and shows the capability to do so, I will allow the student to hand write the paper, so long as their handwriting is legible.

Student with a Physical Challenge:

- All 504 accommodations will be made.
- Aside from general accommodations listed, I will ensure that any group work done will take into account that the student does not have to move from their seat--unless they wish to do so and it is within their physical ability.

English Language Learner:

- All 504 accommodations will be made.
- ELL student will be given copies of all handouts in their native language.
- Student will also be given a copy of William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* in their native language. Group discussion will help student to become more comfortable speaking English with their classmates.
- Video to be play in class with have subtitle in student's native language.

High Achieving Student:

- Student will have opportunities to contribute to class discussion and make inferences that match their intellect.

At Risk Student:

- Student will receive physical copies of all handouts.
- Student will have a chance to interact with classmates during group and partner work
- Student will have the chance to reflect on their own opinions, making the material more interesting.
- Whole class discussion will enable student to feel heard, especially creatively.

Student on the Autism Spectrum:

- All 504 accommodations will be made.
- See general accommodations.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

Now you are the casting director! Create a cast list for the character's of *Julius Caesar* using famous Hollywood actresses. Give a short response for each actor stating why you chose them for their particular role (this can be previous roles or interviews you have seen them in.)

In addition, please provide a short summary--no more than one page--on what you believe your actress would have to do to prepare for their role as the title character himself: Julius Caesar.

Assignments will be due at the start of class tomorrow and will be used in group discussion!

Works Cited

1. Isherwood, Charles. "A Timeless Thirst for Power." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 08 Oct. 2013. Web. 10 Apr. 2014.
2. Brantley, Ben. "Friends, Romans, Countrywomen." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 09 Oct. 2013. Web. 10 Apr. 2014.
3. Isherwood, Charles. "A Timeless Thirst for Power." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 08 Oct. 2013. Web. 10 Apr. 2014.
4. Milner, Joseph O'Beirne, Lucy Floyd Morcock Milner, and Joan F. Mitchell. *Bridging English*. 5th ed. New York: Merrill, 1993. Print.
5. Shakespeare, William, and Susan P. Cerasano. *Julius Caesar*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2012. Print.